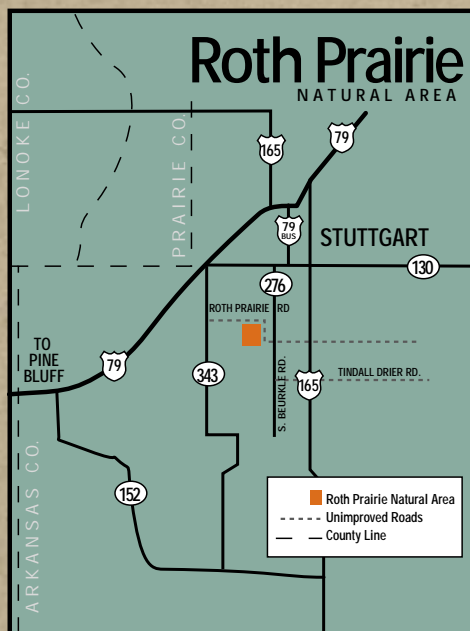


Roth Prairie Natural Area is representative of a series of tallgrass prairies that appear in the lower Mississippi River Valley. Located southwest of Stuttgart in Arkansas County, Roth Prairie is one of the larger remnants of the plant community typical of the Grand Prairie of eastern Arkansas.

Stewardship of Roth Prairie is by the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, an agency of the Department of Arkansas Heritage.

The Arkansas General Assembly created the Natural Heritage Commission in 1973. The agency's job is 1) to identify those lands and waters that retain the state's most valuable biological resources, 2) to acquire tracts of such lands for inclusion in the system of natural areas, and 3) to manage those resources for the benefit of future generations while promoting their appreciation and beneficial use.

For more information on the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, write to 1500 Tower Building, 323 Center Street, Little Rock, AR 72201; call (501) 324-9619; or e-mail info@DAH.state.ar.us and check out our Web site at <http://www.heritage.state.ar.us/nhc/>



Roth Prairie Natural Area is part of the Arkansas System of Natural Areas.



THIS PROJECT
FUNDED IN PART
BY THE REAL ESTATE
TRANSFER TAX.

The Arkansas System of Natural Areas is administered by the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, a state agency within the Department of Arkansas Heritage.

Roth Prairie

NATURAL AREA



A remnant
of Arkansas's
Grand Prairie



Prescribed fire mimics the role of naturally occurring fire.
(photo by Jim Walsmith)

The central plains region of North America, the "Great Plains," is a vast and well-known feature of our country. Isolated grasslands also exist in parts of Arkansas, but these are less well known than the Great Plains. Roth Prairie, at 41 acres, is one of the larger remnants of these isolated grasslands that once covered eastern Arkansas's Grand Prairie region. Purchased in 1976, it is the first natural area that the Natural Heritage Commission bought.

The rainfall on the prairie, dense soils, bison, the temperature, and the lightning-sparked prairie fires all worked together to create the prairie ecosystem.

More than 99 percent of Arkansas's original grasslands have been cultivated. Turning the soil alters it permanently and allows weeds to invade. Once plowed under, native plants often disappear from the landscape. With few exceptions, only lands set aside for raising hay retain their original flora and soil composition. We call these tracts "prairies," borrowing a word the pioneers used for "grazing land."

Plant life in a grassland community is sensitive to subtle variations in soil moisture, chemistry, and texture. That accounts for the many different grasses and flowering plants that grow here. Any given acre of native grassland may support up to 150 species of native plants.

The soils of Roth Prairie are typical of the Grand Prairie as a whole, fairly level, poorly drained, acidic and loamy near the

surface, and only very slowly permeable to moisture, thanks to a subsoil of tightly packed clay.

Another feature of Roth Prairie is the "prairie mounds," domes that rise up to 3 feet high and 35 to 50 feet wide. Most prairies in Arkansas have such mounds, which are visible evidence that they never have been plowed and leveled.



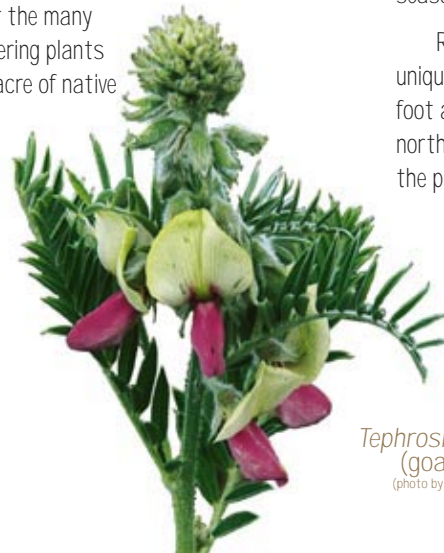
(photo by Harold Grimmett)

Some say that the prairie mounds originated with glacial

melting north of Arkansas, but no one is certain how the mounds developed. They were not created by "gas bubbles" or by the New Madrid earthquake.

Pineywoods dropseed, a grass that may bloom as late as December, and Arkansas sneezeweed are among Roth Prairie's special plant species. The area hosts beautiful wildflowers throughout the growing season.

Roth Prairie is held in public trust to maintain its unique and rare natural features. Access is limited to foot and wheelchair traffic from a parking area in the northwest corner of the prairie.



Tephrosia virginiana
(goat's rue)
(photo by Clayton Bowles)